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TAGS: PREL PARM MARR JA

SUBJECT: DPJ'S YAMAOKA - FUTENMA PLANS DIFFICULT TO
IMPLEMENT, BUT DPJ NOT TO LEAVE ISSUE UNATTENDED

Classified By: James P. Zumwalt, Charge d'Affaires, a.i.; reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yamaoka Kenji stressed repeatedly during a January 14 meeting with visiting Senators Daniel Inouye and Thad Cochran that the plans for the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) had not been implemented in the past 13 years because all parties involved had recognized that it was a difficult problem. Yamaoka stated that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to implement the current plans to relocate MCAS Futenma to Camp Schwab due to the lack of local support from the people of Okinawa and potential environmental issues. Yamaoka acknowledged the DPJ had some difficulty in managing the issue since the government transition, but promised the DPJ would not leave the FRF issue unattended. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On January 14, visiting Senators Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Thad Cochran (R-MS) met with Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka. CDA Zumwalt and Embooffs accompanied the CODEL. Yamaoka recognized that the U.S.-Japan Alliance continued to be the most important relationship to Japan, stressing that this would remain unchanged despite the current atmosphere and recent change in government. He reiterated several times that the issues surrounding the Futenma Relocation Facility (FRF) had not been resolved over the past 13 years because all parties concerned understood it to be a difficult problem. Although the FRF issue was not a new issue, it was one that the DPJ had inherited from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), who had 13 years to resolve it and could not. The DPJ, on the other hand, had been given only three months to "break the stalemate" over the issue, Yamaoka noted.

¶3. (C) Yamaoka underscored that the current plan to move MCAS Futenma to Camp Schwab (Henoko) was difficult, if not impossible, to implement, due to opposition from local residents and the potential environmental impact on Okinawa. He admitted the DPJ took into consideration the possible outcome of mayoral elections in Nago City when reviewing the relocation plan. Yamaoka compared the difficulty implementing the FRF to the addition of a second runway at Narita Airport. The DPJ would seek an alternative location for the FRF and would try to gain USG consent.

¶4. (C) Yamaoka explained that, historically, Japanese politicians have had considerably less influence in policy formulation and the LDP had relied heavily on government bureaucrats to formulate policies for Japan. Under the new DPJ-led government, politicians and statesmen would take on the entire responsibility of formulating policy. He acknowledged, however, there had been some difficulty in managing and handling all the issues with the transition to a new government. Yamaoka nevertheless promised the DPJ would not leave the FRF issue unattended. Responding to Senator Inouye's remark that the U.S. Congress had already budgeted funds for the FRF, Yamaoka explained that the Diet was also in the process of budgeting provisional funds for relocation, but had to wait for a final decision from the government. The matter is being handled by the government now, but we in the party are watching carefully and if the time comes, when we need to move, we will do so, he said. Yamaoka closed by noting that Senator Inouye's comments had made a deep impression and encouraged the Senator to take the same firm approach with Prime Minister Hatoyama the following day.

¶5. (U) The delegation has cleared this message.
ZUMWALT